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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002946

SIPDIS

EO 12958 DECL: 12/04/2018
TAGS PGOV, PREL, PHUM, PINR, ECON, ETRD, KDEM, RS
SUBJECT: PUTIN EXUDES LEADERSHIP DURING FOUR HOUR Q AND A
SESSION

Classified By: DCM Eric S. Rubin; reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (SBU) Summary: Prime Minister Vladimir Putin displayed thorough knowledge of the issues facing Russia during a live, televised question and Russian people. End Summary.

Question and Answer Dynamics

2. (SBU) On December 3 Putin conducted a marathon, four-hour question and answer session during which he answered 80 questions from a variety
3. (SBU) Putin appeared comfortable with the event's format, and demonstrated an encyclopedic knowledge of statistics in his answers. As he ha
4. (SBU) Putin personally selected a controversial question about Stalin's legacy and whether he viewed the former Soviet leader as good or ba

Tandem Politics Show Putin Still on Top

5. (C) Tandem politics stood out as an important issue when people asked Putin directly about his plans to run for President in 2012 and his r
6. (C) Putin's excellent performance only added to his cultivated image as Russia's dominant national leader and the one in control of the tar
7. (C) In contrast, Communist Party Deputy Chairman Ivan Melnikov told us that the show was nothing more than "psycho-therapy" for a populatic
8. (SBU) A pre-event Levada Center poll emphasized that Russians saw Putin as the country's leader, and his "meat and potatoes" issues as more

Comment

9. (C) Putin's guarded comments about his participation in the 2012 presidential election have helped him retain his position as the national